

eth. Sire, yene be nat alwey in lykedisposi-
cioun; for certes somthyng that somtyme
semeth to yow that it is good for to do, an-
other tyme it semeth to yow the contrarie.

WHAN ye han taken conseil of
yoursel, & han demed by good
deliberacion swich thyng as you
semyth best, thanne rede I yow, that ye
kepe it secree. Biwrey nat youre conseil to
no persone, but if so be that ye wenen sike-
ly that thurgh youre biwreyng, youre con-
dicion shal be to yow the moore profit-
able, for Ihesus Syrak seith. Neither to
thy foo ne to thy frend discovere nat thy
secree ne thy folie; in they wol yewe yow
audience and lookyng and supportacioun
in thy presence, and scorne thee in thy ab-
sence. Another clerk seith, that Scarsly
shaltou fynden any persone that may kepe
conseil secreely.

THE book seith. Whil that thou
kepest thy conseil in thyn herte,
thou kepest it in thy prisoun: and
whan thou biwreyest thy conseil to any
wight, he holdeth thee in his snare. And
therfore yow is bettre to hyde youre con-
seil in youre herte, than praye him to whom
ye han biwreyed youre conseil, that he wole
kepen it cloos & stille; for Seneca seith. If
so be that thou ne mayst nat thyn owene
conseil hyde, how darstou prayen any oo-
ther wight thy conseil secreely to kepe?

BUT natheles, if thou wene sikely
that the biwreyng of thy conseil to a
persone wol make thy condicion to
stonden in the bettre plyt, thanne shaltou
tellen hym thy conseil in this wise. first,
thou shalt make no semblant wheither thee
were levere pees or werre, or this or that, ne
shewe hym nat thy wille and thy entente;
for trust wel, that comunly thise conseil-
lours been flatereres, namely the conseil-
lours of grete lordes; for they enforcen hem
alwey rather to speken pleasant wordes, en-
clynynge to the lordes lust, than wordes
that been trewe or profitable. And therfore
men seyn, that The riche man hath seeld
good conseil but if he have it of hymself.

AND after that, thou shalt considere
thy frendes & thyne enemys. And
as touchyng thy frendes, thou
shalt considere whiche of hem been moost
feithful and moost wise, & eldest, & most
approved in conseil; and of hem shalt
thou aske thy conseil as the caas requireth.

SEVE that first ye shul clepe to
yoursel conseil youre frendes that
been trewe, for Salomon seith that
Right as the herte of a man deliteth in
savour that is soote, right so the conseil of
trewe frendes yeveth swetenesse to the
soule. He seith also. Ther may nothing
be likned to the trewe frend. for certes,

gold ne silver beth nat so muche worth as
the goode wyl of a trewe frend. And eek,
he seith that. A trewe frend is a strong
defence; whoso that hym fyndeth, certes,
he fyndeth a greet tresour.

THANNE shul ye eek considere, if that
yoursel trewe frendes been discrete
and wise, for the book seith. Aze
alwey thy conseil of hem that been wise.
And by this same resoun shul ye clepen to
yoursel conseil of youre frendes that been
of age, swiche as han seyn and been expert
in manye thynges, & been approved in con-
seillynges; for the book seith that In the
olde men is the sapience, & in longe tyme
the prudence. And Tullius seith: that Grete
thynges ne been nat ay accompyed by
strenge, ne by delivernesse of body, but
by good conseil, by auctoritee of persones,
and by science; the whiche thre thynges ne
been nat fieble by age, but certes, they en-
forcen & encreesen day by day. And thanne
shul ye kepe this for a general reule.
first shul ye clepen to youre conseil a fewe
of youre frendes that been especiale; for
Salomon seith. Manye frendes have
thou; but among a thousand, chese thee
oon to be thy conseilour. for, albe it so that
thou first ne telle thy conseil but to a fewe,
thou mayst afterward telle it to mo folk, if
it be nede. But looke alwey that thy con-
seillours have thilke thre condicions that
I have seyd bifore; that is to seyn, that they
be trewe, wise, and of oold experience. And
werke nat alwey in every nede by oon coun-
seillour allone; for somtyme bihoveth it
to been counselled by manye; for Salomon
seith. Salvacioun of thynges is wheras
ther been manye conseilours.

NOW, sith I have toold yow of which
folk ye sholde been counselled, now
wol I teche yow which conseil ye oghte
to eschewe. first, ye shul eschue the con-
seillyng of foolles; for Salomon seith.
Taak no conseil of a fool, for he ne kan
nought conseil but after his owene lust
and his affecioun. The book seith: that
The propretee of a fool is this. He throw-
eth lightly harm of every wight, & lightly
troweth alle bountee in hymself. Thou
shalt eek eschue the conseil of alle
flatereres, swiche as enforcen hem rather
to preise youre persone by flaterie, than
for to telle yow the soothfastnesse of
thynges.

THEREFORE Tullius seith. Hu-
manges alle the pestilences that
been in frendshipe the gretteste
is flaterie. And therfore it is moore nede
that thou eschue and drede flatereres than
any oother peple. The book seith. Thou
shalt rather drede and flee fro the sweete
wordes of flaterynge preiseres, than fro the

egre wordes of thy frend that seith thee
thy sothes. Salomon seith: that. The
wordes of a flaterere is a snare to cacche
with innocents. He seith also, that. He
that speket to his frend wordes of swet-
nesse & of plesauce, setteth a net bifore
his feet to cacche hym. And therfore,
seith Tullius. Encline nat thyne eres
to flatereres, ne taaketh no conseil of the
wordes of flaterie. And Caton seith.
Aysse thee wel, and eschue the wordes of
swetenesse and of plesauce.

AND eek thou shalt eschue the con-
seillyng of thyne old enemys that
been reconciled. The book seith:
that No wight retourneth sauily into the
grace of his old enemy; and Isopse seith.
Ne trust nat to hem to whiche thou hast
had somtyme werre or enemytee, ne telle
hem nat thy conseil. And Seneca telleth
the cause why. It may nat be, seith he,
that where greet fyr hath longe tyme en-
dured, that ther ne dwelleth som vapour
of warmnesse. And therfore seith Salo-
mon. In thyne olde foo trust nevere. for
sikely, though thyne enemy be reconciled
and maketh thee chiere of humylitee, and
lowteth to thee with his heed, ne trust hym
nevere; for certes, he maketh thilke feyned
humylitee moore for his profit than for any
love of thy persone; bycause that he deem-
eth to have victorie over thy persone by
swich feyned contenance, the which victorie
hem myght nat wyne by strif or werre. And
Peter Alfonce seith. Make no felawshipe
with thyne olde enemys; for if thou do hem
bountee, they wol perverten it into wikked-
nesse.

AND eek thou most eschue the con-
seillyng of hem that been thy ser-
vants & beren thee greet reverence;
for peraventure they doon it moore for
drede than for love. And therfore seith a
philosophre in this wise. Ther is no
wight parfitly trewe to hym that he to soore
dredeth. And Tullius seith. Ther nys
no myght so greet of any emperour, that
longe may endure, but if he have moore love
of the peple than drede.

THOU shalt also eschue the conseil-
ling of folk that been dronkelewe;
for they kan no conseil hyde. for
Salomon seith. Ther is no privetee ther;
as regneth dronkenesse. Ye shul also han
in suspect the conseil of swich folk as
conseille yow a thyng prively, and conseille
yow the contrarie openly; for Cassidorie
seith: that. It is a manere sleighte to hy-
dre, whan he sheweth to doon a thyng open-
ly and werketh prively the contrarie.

THOU shalt also have in suspect the
conseillyng of wikked folk; for the
book seith. The conseil of wikked

ked folk is alwey ful of fraude. And David
seith. Blisful is that man that hath nat
folwed the conseil of shrewes. Thou
shalt also eschue the conseil of yong
folk; for hir conseil is nat rype.

NOW sith I have shewed yow of
which folk ye shul take youre con-
seil, and of which folk ye shul folwe
the conseil, now wol I teche yow how ye shal
examine youre conseil, after the doctrine
of Tullius.

IN the examynynge thanne of youre
conseillour, ye shul considere manye
thynges. Alderfirst thou shalt con-
sidere, that in thilke thyng that thou pur-
posest, & upon what thyng thou wolt have
conseil, that verray trouthe be seyd and
conserved; this is to seyn, telle trewely thy
tale; for he that seith fals may nat wel be
conseilled in that cas of which he lieth.

AFTER this, thou shalt considere
the thynges that acorden to that
thou purposest for to do by thy
conseillours, if resoun accorde therto; and
eek, if thy myght may atteine therto; and if
the moore part and the bettre part of thy
conseillours accorde therto, or no. Thanne
shaltou considere what thyng shal folwe
after hir conseil; as hate, pees, werre,
grace, profit, or damage; and manye othere
thynges. And of alle thise thynges, thou
shalt chese the beste, and weyve alle othere
thynges. Thanne shaltou considere of
what roote is engendred the matiere of thy
conseil, and what fruyt it may conceyve
and engendre. Thou shalt eek considere
alle thise causes, fro whennes they been
sprongen.

AND whan ye han examyned youre
conseil as I have seyd, and which
partie is the bettre and moore pro-
fitable, and hast approved it by manye wise
folk and olde; thanne shaltou considere
if thou mayst parfourne it and maken of it
a good ende. for certes, resoun wol nat that
any man sholde bigynne a thyng, but if he
myghte parfourne it as hym oghte. Ne no
wight sholde take upon hym so hevy a
charge that he myghte nat bere it. for the
proverbe seith. He that to muche em-
braceth, distreyneth litel. And Catoun
seith. Assay to do swich thyng as thou
hast power to doon, lest that the charge
oppresseth thee so soore, that thee bihoveth
to weyve thyng that thou hast bigonne.
And if so be that thou be in doute wheither
thou mayst parfourne a thyng or noon,
chese rather to suffre than bigynne. And
Piers Alfonce seith. If thou hast
myght to doon a thyng of which thou most
repente thee, it is bettre Nay, than Ye.
This is to seyn, that thee is bettre holde
thy tonge stille, than for to speke.